

Horia Sima's Description of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu

The following is a description of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu excerpted from a section in Horia Sima, *The History of the Legionary Movement*, (Liss, England: Legionary Press, 1995), pp. 32-35.

The Man

From the first moment of meeting Corneliu Codreanu, the thing that was the most striking was his physical presence. No one would have been able to be near him without noticing it, without feeling himself attracted by it, and without asking who he was. His mere appearance in public excited curiosity. This young man seemed like a god come amongst mere mortals.

He was tall and possessed of a larger than average head, without being however, a giant of a man who could make others feel ill at ease. His development stopped exactly where it was necessary in order to endow him naturally with an air of distinction. Well proportioned, slim and supple, he was but muscle, resonance and style.

If one examined the perfectly rounded features of his face, the admiration increased. No false note disrupted the harmony of the whole. His face was round, his complexion pale; his forehead upright with the eye arches slightly raised; his dense chestnut coloured hair was sharply delineated from his skin; his same coloured eyebrows neatly curved. Between his eyes two parallel folds highlighted his interior powers of concentration. His eyes were wide and green, a limpid green, warm and soothing, the nose straight and regular; the mouth beautifully drawn. A baritone voice, melodious and deep; long, fine hands that would have been the envy of any pianist; a regal bearing.

If we wanted to define him according to the artistic canons of our civilization, we would have to say that he was the synthesis of Nordic beauty with that ideal beauty of Ancient Greece. Even the Tharaud brothers in their book, *The Messenger of the Archangel*, and without a good word for the Captain, had commented upon "*his classical features.*"

Looking at him one felt overwhelmed, bewitched. His face exuded an irresistible fascination. He was "*a living manifesto*" as the legionaries used to say.

He was the leader without peer, the one who carries the day whatever the gathering, whatever the situation. In his presence, everyone else naturally took second place, and it was he alone who always remained the subject of general interest.

Without doubt there is in this world a host of individuals with some special feature, but who are empty within, who are not aware of any moral or spiritual impulse that corresponds to the physical gifts that nature has bestowed upon them. With Corneliu Codreanu, to this physical magnificence was attached an extraordinary interior richness. The acclamations of the crowd left him wholly untouched. The praise of him made him angry. He possessed only the pride of the fighter and the ambitions of the great reformers.

The common sense of the Captain was proverbial. In human relations he was possessed of a rare humility and a perfect tact. He was wholly incapable of being unjust to no matter whom, to do the least evil consciously. From this spiritual body comes, moreover, one of his great teachings: always act correctly and politely, even with your enemies; only use moral weapons in the struggle. A victory gained through treachery was vitiated at core and could not last.

Yet at the same time, when the situation required it, this same gentle soul would bubble with volcanic energy. His gestures, normally calm and precise, cut the air like a blade of steel. His tranquil features hardened and his eyes emitted flashes of lightning.

The main characteristic of his soul was kindness. If someone wanted to know the main reason why Corneliu Codreanu threw himself into such a difficult, almost impossible, struggle, the only true reply is that he had pity for the suffering of the people. His heart bled from a thousand wounds seeing the misery in which the Romanian peasants and workers were struggling. His love for his people had no limits! He was sensitive to every suffering afflicting the toiling masses. He had a reverence for the poor and gave over infinite attention to their dreams and hopes. The least complaint, the least request, was studied with the same seriousness as that accorded to grave political problems.

It is this immense love for the people which gives birth to and which propels the Legionary Movement. Into its foundations, he put the whole of his feelings and sacrifice. He joined his people with pride and devotion on its road of endless sufferings until the torturers took away his life. His death was a crime, not merely against the Romanian nation and the Legionary Movement, but against all the moral and spiritual principles of mankind that he defended and incarnated like all true martyrs. The future will surely be more gracious to him than was his own period.

Nevertheless, his sacrifice was not in vain! From beneath the rubble of a holocaust that should have marked the end of all hope, the tree of life of legionary doctrine pushes forth unendingly the immortal ideas of the Captain.

The central role of the Captain of the construction of the new Romanian conscience has been admirably described by Dr. Ion Banea. This comrade of the first hour, one of the most loved of his colleagues, and who, like him, died a martyr, characterized his leader thus:

"The Captain!

A steadfast marker, a frontier. A sword held between two worlds. An old world which he valiantly strives to overthrow; a new world that he creates, to which he gives life, which he calls into the light.

His figure in the ensemble of the nationalist movement since the war looms like a wall of fire about which all important events turn. He has been its inspiration, its motivator.

Forever at the front-line of the struggle, full of faith and resolve, never hesitating or seeking to avoid responsibility.

His life is interlaced with the struggle and with the nationalist movement to the point that there is no longer any room for a private life, everything within him constantly melting into one great gesture at the service of the national interest.

Predestined to sacrifice, he led a life vivid and tormented.

His life was full to the brim with action and threatened by all kinds of danger. He raised himself to breathtaking heights and sank into the abyss from which God alone, in whom he believed so strongly, could save him. Defying the view of a life of forced labour, he only wanted to see the greatness of Romanian national solidarity.

The terrible days of prison gnawed at his health, but he knew too the exhilaration of the most poignant moments, when tens of thousands of young people surrounded him and looked up to him.

He walked in step with his times, greeting with a smile on his lips, the sarcasm and the praise.

Truly comprehending courage, he dedicated his life to the struggle. He gave himself entirely to the Movement, asking nothing for himself.

His enemies wished for his death, but it only raise him ever higher.

The Captain! Thought, Decision, Action, Bravery, Life!"

Even today, we may join Ion Banea and say, although 30 years have passed since his infamous murder, that in spite of the wish of his enemies to see him crushed, Corneliu Codreanu has risen irresistibly in the conscience of the Romanian people becoming the spiritual home of the resistance of the invader from the East.